

# The Growing Crisis of Chronic Disease in South Carolina

## Chronic Diseases: What Are They?

Chronic diseases are ongoing, generally incurable illnesses or conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, asthma, cancer, and diabetes. These diseases are often preventable, and frequently manageable through early detection, improved diet, exercise, and treatment therapy.

## Chronic Diseases Cost Lives and Reduce Quality of Life

Chronic diseases are the leading cause of death and disability in South Carolina.

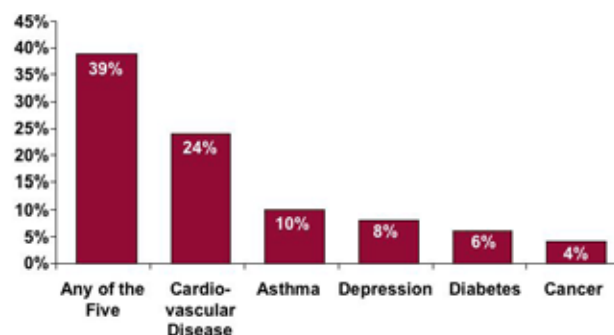
- **More than one and a half million (1,589,098) South Carolina residents suffer from at least one of the five most common chronic diseases.** That's almost two in five (39%) people living in the state.<sup>1</sup>
- **Cardiovascular disease is the most prevalent.** It affects almost a quarter (24%) of the population (993,340 people). Many others suffer from cancer, diabetes, depression, and asthma.<sup>2,3</sup> (See Figure 1)
- **Many adults suffer from associated conditions such as high cholesterol** – One in three (33%) South Carolina adults have been told they have high blood cholesterol.<sup>4</sup>
- **The rate of obesity – a major risk-factor for chronic disease – is skyrocketing.** The percent of obese South Carolina residents (BMI of 30 or more) increased from 14% in 1990, to 22% in 2000, to 29% in 2005.<sup>5,6</sup> (See Figure 2)
- **Chronic diseases disproportionately affect residents in minority racial and ethnic groups.**
  - African Americans, more than 30% of the state's population, have cardiovascular disease and stroke death rates about 1 ½ to two times higher than the state's white population.<sup>7</sup>
  - In South Carolina, African Americans and Hispanics are three times more likely to die from diabetes than whites.<sup>8</sup>

## Chronic Diseases Drive Up Health Spending

State and local governments, communities, employers, and individuals all incur the high costs associated with chronic conditions.

- Chronic diseases cost South Carolina billions of dollars. Total costs related to chronic disease, including direct expenditures (e.g., health care costs) and indirect costs (e.g., lost productivity) amount to \$11 billion. (See Figure 3 for breakdown of costs by disease)
- South Carolina spends an estimated **\$1060 million** in obesity related medical expenditures each year.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 1: Percent of South Carolina Population Affected by Common Chronic Diseases**



**Figure 2: Percent of South Carolina Population Classified as Obese**

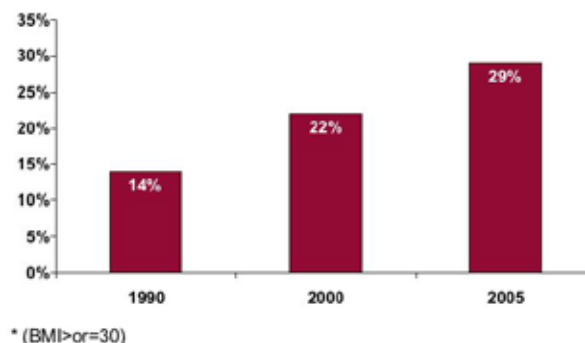


Figure 3<sup>9</sup>

Chronic Disease	Annual Costs (in millions)
Cardiovascular Disease	\$5,402
Cancer	\$3,126
Asthma	\$1,061
Diabetes	\$1,794
Depression	\$1,241
Total (all five diseases)	\$10,998

### Chronic Diseases Are Largely Preventable and Often Manageable

Many chronic diseases could be prevented, delayed, or alleviated, through simple lifestyle changes. Early detection and appropriate treatment of disease can also help to save lives and improve quality of life.

- **Many do not get screened for chronic disease.**
  - More than two in five (44%) South Carolina adults 50 years or older have never had a sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy.<sup>11</sup>
  - More than a quarter (28%) of South Carolina women reported not having a mammogram in the last two years.<sup>12</sup>
- **Many are unaware of their chronic illnesses.** Based on national estimates, one in three South Carolina residents with diabetes may be *unaware* they have it.<sup>13</sup> Without early diagnosis and treatment, these residents may have more difficulty managing their condition.

<sup>1</sup>The Prevalence and Cost of Select Chronic Diseases. The Lewin Group. Research conducted for the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA). March 2007. Available at: <http://www.lewin.com/NewsEvents/Publications>.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Estimates for chronic disease rates vary by data source. The Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) was used for the study completed by the Lewin Group; these estimates may vary from other national data sources.

<sup>4</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Trends Data page. Available at: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/Trends/trendchart.asp?qkey=10010&state=SC>. Accessed April 18, 2007.

<sup>5</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Prevalence Data page. Available at: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/display.asp?cat=DE&yr=2005&qkey=4409&state=SC>. Accessed April 24, 2007.

<sup>6</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Chronic diseases: The leading causes of death in South Carolina page. Available at: [http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/publications/factsheets/ChronicDisease/south\\_carolina.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/publications/factsheets/ChronicDisease/south_carolina.htm). Accessed April 19, 2007.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid

<sup>8</sup>Ibid

<sup>9</sup>The Prevalence and Cost of Select Chronic Diseases. The Lewin Group. Research conducted for the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA). March 2007. Available at: <http://www.lewin.com/NewsEvents/Publications>.

<sup>10</sup>Finkelstein E, Fiebelkorn I, Guijing W. State-Level Estimates of Annual Medical Expenditures Attributable to Obesity. *Obesity Research*. 2004; 12:18-24. Available at: <http://www.obesityresearch.org/cgi/reprint/12/1/18>. Accessed April 24, 2007.

<sup>11</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) page. Available at: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/display.asp?cat=CC&yr=2004&qkey=4425&state=SC>. Accessed April 19, 2007.

<sup>12</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) page. Available at: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/display.asp?cat=WH&yr=2004&qkey=4421&state=SC>. Accessed April 19, 2007.

<sup>13</sup>National Institutes of Health. One in three of diabetes sufferers unaware of having the disease. Available at: <http://www.nih.gov/news/radio/may2006/05262006diabetes.htm>. Accessed April 17 2007.



PARTNERSHIP TO FIGHT  
CHRONIC DISEASE

A VISION FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE